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Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Families, Family Policies and Gender Equity

The United Nations through its Secretary General, has encouraged to promote "data collection and research on family issues and the impact of public policy on families" [A/70/61–E/2015/3], because "the very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals" [A/66/62–E/2011/4]. With that objective, the International Federation for Family Development has promoted the Project: Sustainable Development Goals and Families in partnership with The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Office of Research–Innocenti, the collaboration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and with team of global experts on family issues from Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and America, to developed pragmatic processes and procedures to assess how family policies work to affect different social progress goals (as defined in the Sustainable Development Goals) in different parts of the world; how the actions of non-government actors working in support of families contribute to the issue; and family attributes at household or national level impact on the effectiveness of the previously identified family interventions.

The following are some of the key findings of that research, regarding Sustainable Development Goal 5:

Families, Family Policies and Gender Equity

The wage gap between men and women remains wide everywhere. And exists, to the detriment of women, in all countries regardless of the stage of economic development. According to The International Labour Organization (ILO) data, four of the top ten worst countries in gender wage gap are The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries (Netherlands, Austria, United Kingdom, and Israel).

Women are less likely to work for pay and are more prone to work shorter hours and work part-time (ILO, 2016a). Data from 121 countries, covering 92 per cent of total employment worldwide, show that women represent less than 40 per cent of total employment, but makeup 57 per cent of those working part-time (ILO, 2016a). Women are more likely to have shorter job tenure and also more likely to have experienced more career interruptions than their male counterparts.

Although there is a general notion of the increase in women's labour force participation, the global female labour force participation rate decreased slightly (from 52.4 to 49.6 per cent) between 1995 to 2015, and the chance of women being on the job market remains about 27 percentage points lower than those for men (ILO, 2016a).

Families, family types and gender

The interplay within families profoundly affects power relationships between men and women through the allocation of roles and responsibilities for domestic work and upbringing of their children. How men and women spend their time within their family mirrors and reproduces the differences in their access to resources outside the home, namely income and political power. Gender inequality in the public sphere is both the cause and the result of the inequality in the private sphere.

At the individual level, men and women need to maintain an adequate balance between paid employment and family responsibilities. The proposed solutions to this dilemma vary among counties. The prescribed policies depend on many factors, such as the country' demographic structures (e.g. fertility, mortality, mobility and availability of immigrant workers), social policies (e.g. welfare system, family structure, and labour policies), labour markets structure (e.g. industry composition, degree of gender segregation), and gender-role ideologies (e.g. what is thought to be appropriate for men and women). Moreover, these solutions exist within a context of changes to family types, such as increasing rates of single-parent families (headed most often by women) in high income settings, and multi-generation households globally (as families respond to increasing housing costs and labour market demands).

Families, gender equity outcomes and links to other SDGs

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goal s aims to achieve gender equality not only as a fundamental human right but also as a necessary condition for achieving peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable development. Although gender equality is enshrined in a stand-alone goal of its own, it is a cross-cutting issue and is deeply interlinked with many of the other Sustainable Development Goals such as poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), and education (Goal 4).

For example, women still make up a high proportion of people living in income poverty (e.g. Chant, 2006), and gender equality are expected to contribute to the reduction of poverty through improvement in women's income, health, education, and access to and control over land and other resources. Women play a critical role in the global food system, in production, preparation, consumption, and distribution.

During the last half decade, while the overall proportion of the population engaged in agriculture is declining, the percentage of female involved in agriculture is increasing (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United, 2011). Improving educational opportunities for women has long been known to have a l. gh social return regarding decreasing infant/child mortality, and improving children's health and their education. (Shultz, 1995).

When women have more influence over economic decisions, their families can allocate more income to food, health, education, children's clothing and children's nutrition (e.g. Doss, 2006, 2014).

Types of family policy and their effects on gender equity

Regarding gender equity, early years matter, as this is the time when differences begin to open between male and female career trajectories, and demands on home production. Inevitably therefore, longer and generous parental leave policies that are provided mainly to women, do not necessarily promote gender equality in the labour market as they can encourage mothers to delay their return and thus jeopardize long-term advancement of their career (See Table 5). Childcare policies, that are not employment sensitive, can also have an effect here. When the costs of parental leave (financial, or in terms of time or productivity) are also met by employers, this can also affect gender equity as decisions related to hiring women can be uni.'rly influenced at this stage.

One caution regarding this evidence on gender equity is that it is all from high-income settings, and little has been done in terms of quality-evaluation in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, across all countries and settings – and despite the impact of family policies to influence the labour market (and labour market attachment) –

gender equality in the public sphere is also affected by unpaid domestic work and care work; policies for which need to be developed particularly in the light of growing elder care needs, and more single headed households (particularly female headed households).

Despite this high-income country focus, there are global lessons to be drawn about the effects of family policies on gender equity in the labour market, in home production, and child rearing – the most striking of which is the need to address inherent gender inequality in the design of these family benefits.

Key Messages: Family policy and Sustainable Development Goal 5

- Longer and generous parental leave policies do not necessarily promote gender equality in the labour market. They encourage mothers to delay their return and thus jeopardize long-term advancement of their career, resulting in perpetuating gender gap in economic rewards.
- Parental leave reserved for fathers, as a benefit non-transferable to mothers (daddy quota), is a promising scheme to encourage fathers to take leave from work, especially when this benefit is provided as bonus period of 'take-it-or-lose-it'. It is very important that the leave for fathers is well paid because of a strong incentive for a couple to allocate their time for paid and unpaid work according to the comparative advantage.
- Gender equality in the public sphere can never be achieved unless unpaid domestic work and care work is shared more equally in the private sphere.
- Future family policies must ensure the well-being of children while making sure that equality between genders is promoted.

It is striking to note that studies on changes to paternity leave have not evaluated the effects of policies on women's work patterns or preferences (although they do look at gender equity in home production). Work is needed here if we are to understand better the family policy effects and recent extensions to paternity leave on gender equitable employment.

Literature reviews, and cautions for learning across different development contexts

Two key ambitions set in advance of undertaking the literature reviews that contribute to the main report, were to be 'as rigorous as possible' and 'universal in regional coverage'. This meant the inclusion of only the most rigorous studies we could find and to take a 'universal' approach to reviewing the role of family policies in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by including literature from across the globe.

Inevitably, these ambitions have been met to varying extent across the Sustainable Development Goals covered, due to differences in the wealth and quality of available literature, determined by the existence and development of family policies and welfare in states across the world, and available data and resources for undertaking robust evaluation studies one form or another.

Imbalance in the wealth of data, both by regions of the world, and between the Sustainable Development Goals topics themselves, means that this study cannot claim to be fully-representative of global experiences, or to be equally balanced in terms of informing how family policies influence the different Sustainable Development Goals in different settings.

With these limitations in mind, salient cautions for interpreting the findings of this synthesis review are as follows:

1. The studies reviewed are more likely to come from higher income settings. This can influence how generalizable the findings of each study are, and how generalizable the summary findings are. It is important to not:

- Evidence from evaluations is more likely to be applicable in contexts that can replicate the socio-demographic and economic situation of study countries.
- Even in cases of similarities of social and economic contexts, the political and policy structures and systems will also determine the replicability of policies and programs from country to country. Again, evidence from evaluations are more likely to be applicable in contexts where public governance and finance structures can replicate the context of study countries.
- Some of the implications for key messages do depend on 'systems' that can provide well-trained professional staff, deliver specialized services, in stable housing. Where this is the case, readers from different settings should determine whether specific practices could be replicated in a meaningful way.
- Where systems are not immediately replicable, policymakers and practitioners should explore methods of system strengthening, reform, and capacity building (i.e. How can these systems/staff be developed/trained in lower income countries?).

2. There are no individual studies covering one region, the Middle East. There are no low-income studies in Sustainable Development Goals 5 on Gender Equity.

3. Inferences about replicability of high-income programmes and policies need to more clearly supported by cost evidence set in a broader public finance discourse. Cost evidence is not forthcoming from the studies reviewed.

Nonetheless, within these limitations, these studies are an important contribution to the global evidence base, and highlight, within their scope, the potential for well-designed family policy to set strong foundations for meeting social progress goals across the globe. Where possible, information relevant to interpreting the generalizability of findings (country of study, family-focus) has been introduced.

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